

## [Martin Henry Kilgore]

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words

Pioneer Experiences

of a Sheepman in a

Cattle Country [?]

EDITORIAL FIELD COPY

by

Mrs. Florence Angermiller, P.W. UVALDE COUNTY, DISTRICT #10 [?] [?]

PART ONE

MARTIN HENRY KILGORE

Uvalde, Texas.

"Isaac Clark and Susan Tibbetts Kilgore were my parents. My father was born in Ohio near Columbus. He was about 85 years old the last time I saw him, which was during the world's Fair at Chicago about forty years ago.

"I was born in 1853, in Richmond, Illinois. My people were all farmers and dairymen. In the last few years I was on the farm, we put in a cheese factory of our own and bought milk from about one-hundred and fifty cows. We kept forty and fifty cows of our own all the

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time. We have a cheese recipe handed down by my mother's people from Vermont that no one knows anything about. I can make that cheese today. We worked it over and treated it after it was made and it would keep for years and years packed in jars.

"I really took hold of our place when I was fourteen yearn old. It used to be hard on me to sit and milk cows when the others boys were going swimming. Then I was out and at work at four o'clock in the morning.

"We left the farm in '68 or '70, trading it off for a block of business buildings in Fulton, Illinois. I met Miss Ann Porter there and we were married in Clinton, Iowa, across the river from Fulton in November, 1874. Her father was an expert mechanic and steamboat builder. He built steamboats for Diamond Joe for many years. Directly after we were married, the money panic of '73-'75 hit that caused me to take my tools and go out on the road as a scale-repairer. I traveled over Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

"We traded off our business houses for a large farm in Missouri but I only stayed there about two years. I turned it all over to my father and came to Texas in '81, hitting Fort Worth in a Texas blizzard.

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"When I came to San Antonio in '89 it was the end of the railroad then. I went into the sheep trading. I landed there one Sunday and went down the next morning and formed a partnership with two strangers I never had seen before. We kept the drive hot all the time and made good money. We bought sheep down around San Diego, Duval County, and sold in San Antonio. We bought those sheep for about a dollar or a dollar-and-a-quarter a head and sold them for about two or three dollars per head. We kept that up about two years. We would drive them up to San Antonio as there was no way to ship them and we had to have [?]. There were Indians scares all the time then. The spring before, the Indians had come in there and killed a bunch of [?]. The government didn't do anything about those Indians, so Leo Hall, captain of the rangers, took hold of the situation himself.

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He chased them across the country and caught them in a few hours. He had a pretty good scrap with them. A brother to one of the partners in our outfit, got stuck on the leggins that the chief had on when he was killed and nothing would do him but to get that old chief's leggins. As we were driving the sheep through thick prickley pear all the time, this boy took pity on his old paint pony one day and put those leggins on his forelegs to keep the thorns out of him. When that old horse smelled those leggins, he must have known it was an Indian's. Of all the pitching —hell-fire, he pitched all over that camp.

“We used to travel at night because of the bad men in that country. There were three or four of us and we had an old pack pony we called “Old Pack.’ He would follow us just like a colt and he soon learned how to drive sheep. When we would get to the [?], the sheep would be awfully hard to drive. They would get to eating [?] and wouldn't want to go on at all. Old Pack, it looked like, knew how to nose them along and when he couldn't [?] them go, he would stop and shake his pack and when the tin cans and skillets would rattle, the sheep would stampede and he looked like he got 3 lots of fun out of watching them run. One time after we got to San Antonio, we left Old Peck there in a big pasture close to San Antonio— where part of the town is now — and when we got back, the pasture had been worked out and Old Pack hadn't been found. The water had all dried up in the water hole in the pasture and we were afraid he was dead, but we finally found him and he had been in that pasture without water about three weeks, just living off of prickly pear. We were all glad to see him.

“There were so many dangerous men and cutthroats in that section at that time, we used to have to travel at nights and when we got down in that country, we used to camp close to an old Mexican who lived in the vicinity of San Diego on a ranch. He kept us informed about all those fellows down there. One night we were camped there and all seemed to be quiet. One of our boys had been up and got all the news and it seemed pretty peaceable. For some reason, I woke up in the night sometime and there stood a Mexican. I jumped up with a six-shooter in my hand and the Mexican began praying. That woke the other boys up and they got up with their guns. The Mexican was scared to death and told us he had

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come there for water. As it was drizzling rain, we knew that wasn't right but after we had some fun out of him, we let him go and the next morning we noticed his tracks. It looked like about fifteen feet between each track every jump he took.

"We carried provisions enough to last us between settlements. Sometimes there would be a little store on our road where we could get a few things along as we needed. We had our corn meal and a little flour and of course meat was plentiful. Anyway, we could get 'jerkey' (dried meat) at any ranch we came to.

"In '84 or '85, I went down into Mexico buying horse. I made three or four trips to Torreon but I shipped them back by rail. Oh, yes, there was a railroad to Mexico then. I sold some of the horses in San Antonio and some of them I shipped to Louisiana and Arkansas. They only cost about ten pecos and I would get from twenty-five to sixty dollars over here. I made good money on them.

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But I only made those few shipments. I took four carloads of mules to Arkansas from San Antonio once and traded them for cattle. They made me a barrel of money.

"In '86 I took my family and went to [?] with five-thousand head of sheep. It was about September and we were hunting grass and found it to be fine up there right after a good rain they had had. But, by November, it had turned off hot and dry and the wind had blowed it all off. I had to skin out again hunting grass. I couldn't get any help to move except one old one-eyed herder I had, so I went down to 'Robbers Roost' or old Peg-Legs place, as it was called, and hired three outlaws to help me move. We never got off the first day till late in the afternoon and the first night out, my old Mexican herder got up in the night and stole my Winchester and lit out. He made it across the plains with the help I had left. But those men wouldn't go a foot unless I would let them keep a saddlehorse. We were crossing the plains and couldn't carry much water in the wagons and we knew it would be bad for the horses would have to have water as well as us. Well, after we got

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out on the plains, we were twenty-one days without water for the sheep. The grass was green and sheep could live without water. I used to ride ahead and scout out the water. Once we had drained our barrels and had about a-half a bucket of water, dregs and all. Jack Sanders was a kind of excitable fellow and declared that we would starve to death. While he was fuming around, he stumbled over the bucket of water and tipped it over. That ended all the water. I thought he would go crazy. I know that the dews that fell up on the plains were always heavy and that it was said that it would run down the mountain sides of a morning. So I went up on a sort of knoll and found it collected and dipped up two or three gallons. Then I struck out for Beaver Lake to locate it and came back and helped drive the sheep to it. We lined the men all / up on the horses and stayed in the lead to head the sheep off for they were crazy when they smelled the water. That lake covered about an acre or two but when those sheep ran into it, you couldn't see any water at all. They just covered it. They drank till first one leg then the other would raise up for their stomachs were like drums. I thought they would all die but being in the water, I guess, was what saved them for that night we killed a Mutton and there was a full gallon of water inside of him out on the outside of his intestines. It shows that the water had gone through his hide and that he had soaked up a lot. I never lost a sheep.

"My wife and baby daughter, Florence, were along in the wagon this trip. We went on to the Pecos and hit it at the old Tardy Crossing. I got there in December and there wasn't any grass within three mile of the river and it was snowing and cold so we drove back into the best place we could get to make camp and next day I went down to Tardy's camp and consulted him and he said, 'You couldn't get across that river with those sheep. The water is three feet deep and running like a mill race.' The stream was about one-hundred feet across and had a rock bottom. It was running about two or three miles an hour and there I was. I says, 'Boys, we just got to cross that river,' and they laughed at me. We had two wagons and a trail wagon. I crossed the river and traveled on to get to John Camo's ranch as I heard they were building a new house there. After I crossed the river and was on the way to the ranch, it was already night. There was a downward slope for a good

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ways and the black [?] grass was growing pretty thick and as I was going down this slope, my hind-wheel tire ran off and I saw it roll down the hill and glisten in the moonlight. I took in after it afoot and it rolled on down the hill right into a bunch of Mexicans that were camped there and were asleep. They were grasscutters for the government. The tire ran right down among them and nearly [scared?] them to death. I explained to them and [rustled?] in among those Mexicans and got some old boot leather and went back to the wagon and set my tire and went on. I got about thirty pieces of lumber at the ranch after I told my condition and that I had to have some lumber to build a bridge. I got back 6 with the lumber and put three wagons in the river and [?] then the length of the lumber and it reached clear across. My lumber made a floor between the wagons also the side boards. I had to weight the wagons down with rocks to keep them from floating off. I took my men and went out and dragged brush up and made a temporary pen. Then we took one man with a bread-pan of salt and commenced shaking that salt and going across that first wagon. The sheep began following him because they were crazy for salt and they went across that wagon bridge right along and in an hour's time, the whole flock had crossed. Then we moved the camp across and everything was so happy my old shepherd dog had pups that night.

“From then on we had pretty good sailing. I got permission from John Camp and went in below Dryden and stayed there a year. That was the finest range I ever saw. My sheep was sure fat. You know what a time sheep men have at lambing time? Now, the idea of having four or five men at lambing time seemed senseless to me. Right where I was camped, I had three or four sections of fine grazing land— fronting on the river. We had a good watering place and when it come lambing season, I put two Mexican herders on horses and had them round those sheep up. At night one of them would come pick and gather the ewes that had lambed and run them off to one side together and the other man kept the other herd together. I kept that up till I was lambed out and I raised a ninety-six per cent lamp crop. It is a simple thing, though I don't know how the sheep men handle their ewes at lambing time now. Ninety-six per cent average is a good one, but of course

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there was a good many twins born. I had poisoned the hills out there till there wasn't a coyote in the country. There weren't many to start with,

“Well, I had done pretty good with the sheep and they were fat when I decided to sell out. A party from [Paisano?] Pass by the name of Windy Wilson made me a proposition to buy the stock for J. B. Shannon and Company of Norwich, Connecticut. I made the deal with them agreeing to hold all the ewes 7 and lambs that couldn't travel and they took the others to Paisano Pass, so I turned about half of my flock over to Windy. When the other bunch was ready to move, I got a sketch of a sort of a map from a cowboy as to the route I was to take to [Paisano?] Pass, and I hired a green boy to drive the wagon. That was a mistake that sure cost me something. I got within thirty or forty miles of [my?] destination and according to my directions, I got to a windmill and from there, I got directions from another cowboy how to go straight across the country. It was about fifteen miles around the mountain like the wagon would have to go, but straight across with the sheep, it wasn't three miles. It was the Old Smuggler's Trail. I sent the wagon on telling the boy to come back over the pass and meet us with water. Tenderfoot-like, he got crazy when he struck the railroad and skinned out on the train, leaving my wagon and outfit in the [shipp?] pens. The station agent found them and took care of them till he could find out who they belonged to. I had already sent my family on out to [Warfa?] on the train so they were not along. Well, the two herders and I started out across that Mountain afoot and it was three of the hottest days I ever saw. We got about half-way over and the sheep refused to move another foot. We kept waiting for the boy on the wagon to bring us some water. All that afternoon and the next day, the sheep didn't budge. Just stood in that broiling sun down in Chalk Valley. The south side of the mountain along that valley for about fifteen or twenty miles had a drop of about twenty feet, forming a regular [parapet?].

“About the second day in mid-afternoon, the two Mexican herders went crazy, stripped off their clothing and lit out for the water. We had no water nor nothing to eat. There was a sort of weed or growth in that valley that had a fluid pulp we had been chewing on. I think its name is [sianager?]. It had made us all sick, we had eaten so much of it trying to get

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something [?]. Well, after the herders left I held the herd together till dusk then I drove them up on the parapet and [?] them. I started back to the last camp that we had left at the windmill. Now i 8 was peculiar the way I would travel and think I had gone about a half-mile, when I don't suppose I would go over a few-hundred yards. I would fall down and go to sleep. When I would wake up, I would get up and hit it again and do the same thing over. I was several hours getting back to that windmill but when I got there, I had sense enough to drink a little water at a time. I drank for an hour or two. Finally, at daylight, I felt relieved enough to start for a ranch several miles away. I got to their camp early in the morning and they were just sitting down to breakfast and asked me to eat. I said, 'No, thank you, I never eat.' But I asked for some milk and they brought me some but I don't know how much I drank. I had no appetite to eat anything for several days. I just couldn't take anything in my stomach.

"Well, at this ranch, I got three men and horses to help me with my sheep. One was the captain of the rangers and his brother, also another man. We got back and rounded up the sheep. We had a little lunch fixed up and stopped to eat it and one of the men threw a match or cigarette down and set the grass afire Well, sir, there was a prairie fire going in a flash. There were the sheep in the middle of it and we all lit in to fighting the blaze. We fought it with our saddle blankets and as fast as we would whip it out in one place, it would break out behind us. We finally got the fire out and were nearly exhausted an well as all black and smutty. We took the sheep on to water and assembled my wagon outfit from the railroad agent. I left immediately with the herd and went on to [Paisano?] Pass. When I arrived, a member of the firm of Shannon and Company came to me and says, 'I find this man, Windy Wilson, is robbing me. We were short about four-hundred head of sheep we couldn't account for. What are we going to do?' I says, 'I don't know[.]?' He told me then that he wanted me to take the sheep and take care of them for him as he was perfectly helpless against that fellow. My reply was, 'I sold these sheep because I was tired of running them and wanted to get rid of them, but under such conditions, I will help you out 9 but how long will you want me to stay with them?' He said he would get someone



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there as rapidly as possible. I have never seen any of those people since that day. He left us there, but I soon got into correspondence with the firm and told them the best thing we could do would be to buy up several sections of land as the State of Texas had passed an act recently whereby a person might take up six alternate sections in that locality at a pretty cheap price.

"I advised them to do that and we made application for those six sections. I established camp and began to rustle for water. I made arrangements with a ranchman till I could do something else. The cattlemen in there hated sheep and water is scarce in that country, so it was a gloomy outlook. After I was established, I was visited by General Magruder who had been sent out there to my camp. He introduced himself and told me that the State had raised the price on the land in that locality, stating that they should have a tree claim, desert claim and water claim. I asked him if he had any help and he said no. I told him that he would need help because I wasn't going to get off of there. He said he knew it was wrong to demand such a thing, but he would report that he couldn't get us off.

"I began investigations and found that the Catholic Church had all the water rights to that Big Bend country. I suppose they owned a section or so at each watering place, so I got a lease on that part of the country from the Catholic priest at El Paso. Consequently, I returned the six sections of land to the State. I moved on down to my new location and it was the finest sheep country I was ever in. There were two springs, one was the Rosillo Spring and the other was the main spring that ran a big flume of water at the base of the Chisos mountains.

"The cowmen had sworn to kill anybody that ever came in there with sheep. I had the lease all right but it didn't count against those cowmen's guns. Well, I located the first camp at the Rosillo Spring on the west side of the mountain. About the third day there, a delegation of three cowpunchers rode in and wanted to know what the hell I was doing in there with sheep. I saw I was outnumbered, so I resorted to [?].

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"I began discoursing on the remarkable feats of Julius Verne, whose book had been published about his trip to the moon and which was being widely [?] discussed. He had described his trip to the moon so I put on a crazy spell and pretended to be Julius Verne and told them that I and my partner had constructed this machine to make this trip to the moon. I told [?] them that we got everything ready about dusk and had the plane loaded with ballast, water and other things and at the last, we put in our camp dog. We rose about 5,000 feet traveling along at a fairly good rate when we discovered that we were losing altitude about midnight. We commenced throwing out ballast but were still losing altitude so we threw out the rest of the ballast and finally throwed out the dog. We seemed to be traveling without any trouble from that time on. At daylight, we discovered that the dog was traveling right along beside of us in the air. Right along side of the machine.

"When I got to that point, the leader of the cowboys got up and says, 'This damn fool is crazy; let's go.'

"It was laughable, but we got to be good friends later and discussed it from my viewpoint.

"Along about then, there was a great deal of talk about war between Mexico and the United States so I and these three cowpunchers began to lay plans to make some money in case of war. We concluded it would be the right time to stock up on Mexican cattle. We made all preparations to cross the Rio Grande at the Chisos Mountains where thousands of cattle and horses watered every day. We could round up about forty acres of them and drive them across the river. We got word from Marfa every day. The Seminole Scouts were camped there close to me and some of us got information every day and kept up with what the government was going to do. The war didn't occur. We thought that we were the 11 originators of this skeme but, pshaw! we weren't in it. We found where an arrangement had been made with a bunch of men from Silver City, New Mexico, through the help of a [disearded?] priest, to start down to the City of Mexico and rob all the churches and

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missions of their gold and silver and everything valuable if war was declared. We were not the only smart ones with ideas. But since the war didn't occur, the skemes didn't either.

“Later I moved from the Chisos to New Mexico close to Deming. I run sheep there about a year and sold then out. I wrote the eastern concern (Shannon Company) that I had this chance to sell out and was tired of running the sheep any longer. I sold the flock to the United States Marshall at Silver City, and sent Shannon Company their money.

“I have more to tell you for I have seen some ups and downs in my day. I am 84 years old now but in the last few years I have perfected and patented a pump that will probably make another fortune. I don't like to be idle and now since my patent has gone through, I must be getting out to work right away and get things started. I like to figure and have had a great deal of pleasure getting up my drawings and specifications. My big idea has not been patented yet. It is a pump for the oil wells, but in order to put it through, I had to go to work and patent the water pump to get money for the oil pump.

“Out of my five sisters, there is only one living. She lives in San Antonio I was the only boy, except one who died in his youth. I have two daughters in Arizona. My wife longs to go there to live. Well, I find life pretty interesting wherever I go and always find plenty to keep me occupied.

PART TWO FOLLOWS.